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Comments: I am opposed to the proposed addition of section (2355 - Climbing Opportunities) to Forest Service Manual (FSM) 2300. The installation of any fixed equipment within wilderness is incompatible with the intent of the Wilderness Act.

While rock climbing is compatible with the preservation of wilderness values, the installation of permanent structures of any kind is not. Permanent installations would diminish the wilderness character, damage natural features, and attract concentrated use that would further diminish wilderness values.

The primary purpose of Wilderness designations is to protect into perpetuity the natural values of an area in an untrammeled state. It is not to enhance recreational activities of humans. Climbing opportunities would still abound but would have to take place in a primitive manner compatible with wilderness - namely without permanently scarring or degrading the area.

There are plenty of climbing areas available outside of wilderness where permanent anchors can be installed. This allows a wide variety of options for climbers - fully natural and unassisted climbing in a wilderness or assisted climbing in a more accessible area. It is the same situation for hiking, paddling, horseback riding etc. Wilderness designation allows for "primitive recreation." There is more risk and more work involved in undertaking your activity within a wilderness area. That is how it should be.

The small percentage of land within designated Wilderness in the United States is minuscule - less than 3 percent in the lower 48 states. With the myriad challenges and threats encroaching on the flora, fauna, and natural values of wilderness ecosystems we must do all we can to protect those values into the future. That is what the Wilderness Act of 1964 directed and this is what the National Park Service must do.

I urge the U.S. Forest Service to uphold the spirit and provisions of the Wilderness Act by banning the use of fixed climbing anchors in the Wilderness Areas administered by the agency.

I oppose the addition of section (2355 - Climbing Opportunities) to Forest Service Manual (FSM) 2300 - Recreation, Wilderness, and Related Resource Management, Chapter 2350 - Trail, River, and Similar Recreation Opportunities.